Kiran Nagarkar as a Postmodern Novelist

A Resume submitted to

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Broad Topic : Indian English Literature

Title of the Topic : Kiran Nagarkar as a Postmodern Novelist

Introduction :-

While looking at the history of Indian English Literature from 1930s to the present day, one can divide it into two phases. The Modernist and The Postmodernist. The first phase begins with Raja Rao and the second with Salman Rushdie. Prior to this was the phase of 'imitation.' In that phase, Indian writers imitated the English writers in many respect. But the post 1930s phase was 'creative' in its real sense.

Indian English writers have used 'fiction' as a genre to its full extent in all the phases. The great trio R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand have won recognition at home and abroad in 1960s and 70s. They paved the way for their coming generation. The tradition became luxuriant in the hands of Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Ruskin Bond, Ruth Prawar Jabwala, and many more.

The term 'postmodernism' became current in 1980s. It was coined and first used by Arnold Toynbee in 1947 to describe a phase in history. In literary and cultural context the term is used to describe the new trends in art, culture and literature. Postmodernism is a multifaceted term and continuation of modernism in many respects and break away from modernism in some respects.

Postmodernism refers to the experimental literary works after the World WarII. Different scholars have defined postmodernism differently. Of them Lyotard, Baudrillard and Habermas are considered as landmarks.

In the Western world Jean Francios Lyotard's book *'The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge'* (1979) discussed the term in detail. Lyotard

rejected the idea of the 'Enlightenment' and discarded the importance of 'grand narratives' or 'metanarratives'. He gave importance to 'little narratives'. He considers postmodernism as a part of modernism. According to him, "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern".

Jean Baudrillard is another scholar who studied 'postmodernism' in a different way. His work *'Simulations'* (1983) is about postmodernism. In this book he talks about 'the loss of the real'. He says that the real is lost in the images or copies of the real. He says 'we are so caught up in the images and its copies that we have no access to reality beyond the image itself'. This is called 'hyper reality'.

One can see the following features in postmodern literature.

1. A revolt against authority and signification.
2. Use of new styles of writing.
3. Violation of the conventional rules of writing.
4. Break away from the set trends.
5. Blurring distinctions between high and low culture.
6. Celebration of fragmentation and dislocation.
7. Self-reflexivity.
8. Playfulness.
9. Black humour.
10. Techno culture.
11. Destruction of family unit.
12. Ambiguous endings etc.

The postmodern phase in Indian English Literature started with the publication of Salman Rushdie's Magnum opus *'Midnight's Children'*. The shift from 'The

Modern' to 'The Postmodern' is quite invisible as 'postmodernism' is taken as a continuation of Modernism' in many ways by some scholars and as a reaction against 'Modernism' by some others.

The novels after 1980s have some characteristic features underlying them. Such as the broadening of the thematic range, the shift of the 'locale' from the village to the metropolis, social realism, mythical realism, magic realism, the bold depiction of love, sex and marriage, the role of religion and fanaticism, nihilism, absurdism, identity crisis, self reflexivity, failure in human relationships etc. These are the post modern elements in Indian English novel from 1980s.

These features can be found in the post modern novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Avundhati Roy, Shobha Day, Arvind Adiga and Kiran Nagarkar.

Kiran Nagarkar (born 1942) is an Indian novelist, playwright, film and drama critic and screenwriter both in Marathi and English. Nagarkar comes from lower middle-class family. From June to November 2011 he was 'writer in residence' of the Literaturhaus Zurich.

He is a trailblazer in the tradition of Marathi literature. His novel *'Saat Sakha Trechyalis'* (1974) has set a new trend in Marathi novel. The novel is a new experiment in writing which has many postmodern elements such as innovative writing style, absurdism, nihilism, use of fragments etc.

He has got the 'Sahitya Academy Award' (2001) for his novel *'Cuckold'* (1997). He has woven history into a fiction using his unique style in this novel.

Kiran Nagarkar is a unique writer in postmodern period in Indian English Literature. He writes in Marathi and English. He handles various themes at par in his

novels in different ways. His writing focuses new facets and dimensions of life. So he can be put in the aforesaid tradition of postmodern writers.

Kiran Nagarkar's notable works are: *Seven Sixes are Forty Three (1978), Ravan and Eddie (1994), Cuckold (1997), God's Little Soldier (2006), The Extras (2012), Rest in Peace (2015)*.

He has written the plays like *Bedtime Story (1978), Kabirache Kaya Karayache (1994) Stranger Amongst us (1995) etc*.

Besides this he has written some screen plays like *the Broken Circle, The Window and her Friends. The Elephant on the Mouse*.

The present study explores the postmodern elements in the novels written till date by Kiran Nagarkar.

Hypothesis :-

The researcher hypothesizes that Kiran Nagarkar's novels have postmodern elements incorporated in them. The themes like nihilism, absurdism, loss of hope, identity crisis, self discovery, cultural conflict, extremism and fanaticism, unstable faith and betrayal, struggle for survival, over ambitions and shattered dreams, failure in relationship etc. All the postmodern elements incorporated in the Nagarkar's novels will be tested on the ground of its relevance and relation to the Postmodern period. The study aims at testing this hypothesis with suitable illustrations from the novels of Kiran Nagarkar.

Objectives of the Study :-

The following are the objectives of the present study :

1] To explore what postmodernism is and its study in Indian context.

2] To study the postmodern elements in *'Seven Sixes are Forty Three'* such as nihilism, absurdism, fragmentation etc.

3] To explore into the postmodern elements like complexity of life, mixed and multicultural life in metropolis like Mumbai etc. in *'Ravan and Eddie'*.

4] To study the postmodern elements such as failure in relationship, man-woman relationship, the role of religion and God etc. in *'Cuckold'*.

5] To study the postmodern elements in *'God's Little Soldier'* such as extremism, unstable faith in religion.

6] To examine the postmodern elements like struggle for survival, self realization, over ambition and shattered dreams in *'The Extras'*.

7] To explore the postmodern elements in *'Rest in Peace'* like confusion and uncertainty in life, strangeness of life etc.

Methodology :-

The methodology to be adopted for the research is descriptive, analytical and critical with the help of the various print and electronic primary and secondary sources of Kiran Nagarkar. The data will be critically analyzed and evaluated by applying the understanding of the postmodern elements as seen in the selected novels of Kiran Nagarkar.

Tentative Chapter Scheme :

Chapter One : Introduction :

It includes the survey of the Indian English novel as a literary genre, in three phases. The phase of imitation, the phase of modernism and the phase of postmodernism. A brief biography of Kiran Nagarkar with his works will be discussed. Postmodernism and its elements with special reference to Indian context will be explored. The researcher will give the survey of Indian English fiction in three phases the phase of limitation, the modern phase and the postmodern phase. The introductory chapter also talks about hypothesis, methodology, plan and significance of the research.

Chapter Two :-

The chapter examines the postmodern elements nihilism, alienation, absurdism etc. in *'Seven Sixes are Forty Three'*.

Chapter Three :-

The chapter explores the postmodern elements like complexity of life in mixed and multi cultural, society, conflict for culture and identity etc. in *'Ravan and Eddie'*.

Chapter Four :-

The chapter throws light on the postmodern elements in *'Cuckold'*, such as failure in relationship, man-woman relationship, quest for identity etc.

Chapter Five :-

This chapter looks into the postmodern elements like extremism and fanaticism, unstable faith and betrayal etc. in *'God's Little Soldier'*.

Chaper Six :-

This chapter focuses on the postmodern elements in *'The Extras'* like struggle for survival, self realization, over ambition and adjustment etc.

Chapter Seven :-

This chapter focuses on the postmodern elements in *'Rest in Peace'* like confusion and uncertainty in life, strangeness of life etc.

Chapter Eight :-

The chapter intends to sum up the arguments of the earlier chapters and establish Kiran Nagarkar as a postmodern novelist in Indian English Literature. As the writer Kiran Nagarkar is a living one the researcher intends to interview him about his works.

Data, Scope and Limitation :-

The present study will be limited to the works Kiran Nagarkar published in English. All available print and electronic material will be used for the study. Other works of Kiran Nagarkar like drama, screenplays and other works other than the selected ones will not be studied. The scope of this research is to investigate the postmodern elements as found in the novels of Kiran Nagarkar. It proposes to study the postmodern elements in depth in the novels of Kiran Nagarkar.

Pedagogical Implications :-

The present study on Kiran Nagarkar's novels analyses the postmodern elements as reflected in the selected novels. The study will satisfy the questions raised in the classroom discussions for teachers and students of English Literature. The novels can be prescribed for the study for their relevance and the treatment of

postmodernism in them. The study could be of great help to the researchers on Indian English novel in postmodern period.

Significance of the Research :-

Kiran Nagarkar's novels have caught the attention of the scholars of India and the world. They can be best studied in postmodern perspective. This research work will establish Kiran Nagarkar as a postmodern novelist depicting many postmodern elements.

No work of this sort has been taken up at any level. Hence the *raison detre* for the present study does exist.

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